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178

Current Support Brief

REORGANIZATION OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS IN THE USSR



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REORGANIZATION OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS
IN THE USSR

The Soviet union-republic Ministry of Communications is evidently being reorganized, presumably as an all-union ministry. On 19 April an official announcement was made that the Ministry of Communications of the RSFSR had been abolished, and it is probable that similar changes are underway in the other republics. The elimination of communications ministries at the republic level is in large measure a recognition of the existing pervasiveness of the control of the union ministry. The reorganization probably is designed to delineate more clearly lines of authority and responsibility and could serve to eliminate the competition for funds and scarce resources that results from conflicts between local interests and the national communications objectives. 1/

The Ministry of Communications evolved from the Peoples Commissariat of Post and Telegraph that was established in 1918. Although the original organization underwent a series of minor changes in function and title, it retained its all-union character until the end of 1954, when it became a union-republic ministry. Under the union-republic form of organization -- that is, a Ministry of Communications responsible for the USSR as a whole with attendant subordinate ministries of communications in each of the 15 republics -- the individual republic ministries were given little latitude for independent action. The functional operations of post and telecommunications enterprises within the republics were largely controlled by the operational chief directorates of the union ministry in Moscow. The principal function of the republic ministries consisted of providing liaison between Moscow and the subordinate oblast (kray) directorates of communications in administrative matters. The republic ministries also were responsible for the initiation and coordination of communications plans at the republic level. During the drive for decentralization in 1957, planning responsibilities were expanded somewhat, and oblast (kray) directorates of communications were given more freedom to initiate local plans. 2/

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The elimination of republic ministries of communications should only nominally affect the structure of the Ministry of Communications, as existing union directorates and departments in Moscow can be readily adjusted to assume the duties of the republic ministries. It is not likely that there will be any significant changes in organization at the oblast (kray) level.

- 2 -

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Next 3 Page(s) In Document Exempt

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